

GUT Feelings about Amazonia: Potential Affinity and the Construction of Sociality

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This chapter draws the barest outline of what might be a 'grand unified theory' of Amazonian sociality—a GUT, as physicists say. The acronym is meant to be (self) ironic, and here doubly so. What follows is a chunsily packed excerpt of an essay in preparation, which was supposed to be my contribution for the present volume, but which became unmanagably long. The purpose of that essay is to account for some recent arguments about the socially constructed (in the phenomenol sense of the term) character of Amazonian modes of kinship relatedness. My point, in a nutshell, is that no province of human experience is (given as) entirely constricted; something must be (construed as) given. I take as my example a dichotomy central to Western kinship theory and practice, namely, the consanguinity/affinity distinction of Morganian fame, and argue that in Amazonia, it is affinity that stands as the given dimension of the cosmic relational matrix, while consanguinity falls within the scope of human action and intention. This, of course, implies that 'affinity' and 'consanguinity' mean very different things in Amazonian and modern Western kinship ideologies: it is not only *who* is a consanguine or an affine that changes from here to there, but, first and foremost, *what* is a consanguine and an affine.¹

My understanding of Amazonian kinship owes much to the trailbreaking work of Peter Rivière among the Trio (1969a), as well as to his masterful synthesis of Guianese social organization (1984). Most of what I have written on the subject is essentially a rejoinder to his query about the meaning of affinal categories in Guianese socialities. The present contribution intends to carry this dialogue on, being a further step towards what Rivière (1993) has aptly called the 'amerindianization' of traditional concerns of kinship theory. Such dialogical origin and purpose may explain, if not really forgive, the somewhat bizarre self-referential tone of this homage.

POTENTIAL AFFINITY

We have been long aware of the wider resonances of affinal idioms in lowland South America, at least since an early article by Lévi-Strauss on the sixteenth-century Tupinamba, in which he argued that 'a certain kinship tie, the brother-in-law relationship, once possessed a meaning among many South American tribes far transcending a simple expression of relationship' (Lévi-Strauss 1943b: 398). Or perhaps I should have said the wider dissonances of such idioms? For Lévi-Strauss's assertion makes a striking contrast, for example, with Rivière's (1984: 69) wary remark about 'whether the notion of affinity, as the term is generally understood, is applicable within the Guiana region'. Lévi-Strauss is saying that Amerindian affinity means *more* than what it means to us; Rivière is suggesting that it means *less*, since in the Guianese context the notion applies only when marriage takes place with a stranger. In the strongly endogamous societies of that region, a proper marriage involves no affinity, since it reasserts previous cognatic connections and does not entail attitudinal changes. Thus affinity not only means less but the concept itself may be meaningless, at least for some South American tribes.

How are we to reconcile these two opinions? Their apparent disagreement is not related, I believe, to any major ethnographic differences (of which there are many, to be sure) among the groups concerned. In truth, I think that both authors are expressing the same situation. The similarity can be seen if we extend Rivière's point about affinity as applying only to marriage between strangers. Affinity in Amazonia may actually apply to relations with strangers *even if* no marriage takes place. In fact, it applies to strangers *especially if* marriage cannot take place or is not really an issue, which thus brings us back to Lévi-Strauss's remark on the extra-kinship usages of the brother-in-law idiom. Let us remember that *tova jar*, the Tupinamba word for 'brother-in-law', implies not only friendly alliance within and deadly enmity without, but also the reverse; it means at once 'close' and 'opposed'.

In my previous essays on Amazonian kinship (Viveiros de Castro 1993, 1998b; Viveiros de Castro and Fausto 1993), I argued that the Dravidianate relationship terminologies common in that region diverge in some important ways from the eponymous South Indian scheme as described by Louis Dumont. The main difference is that the categories of consanguinity and affinity in Amazonia do not stand in what Dumont called a 'distinctive' or 'equistatutory' opposition, as they did in his Tamil model. The concentric pattern of Amazonian socio-political classifications and of the cognatic idiom in which they are usually expressed inflects the diacritic arrangement of the terminology, creating a pragmatic and ideological—sometimes terminological as well—imbalance between the two categories. As one goes from the proximal to the distal ranges of the relational field, affinity increasingly prevails over consanguinity, becoming the generic mode of relatedness. Instead of the Dravidian box diagram with its symmetrically deployed categories, the Amazonian structure rather evokes a Chinese box, with consanguinity nested within affinity. In brief, affinity hierarchically encompasses consanguinity.

This Amazonian(ist) twist given to the classical Dravidian model was produced by playing, as it were, Dumont against himself, allowing his concepts of hierarchy and encompassment of the contrary to infiltrate the Dravidian equipollent structure. Dumont, however, was quite aware of the possibility of having affinity and consanguinity related in this fashion. Indeed, he maintained that what distinguishes South Indian from North Indian kinship configurations is the fact that the former are not organized by hierarchical opposition, while the latter are. In North India, he wrote,

the word *bhai*, 'brother', effectively bridges kinship and caste by taking increasingly wide meanings when we ascend from the immediate relationships to wider and wider circles. It thus repeatedly encompasses on the higher level what was its contrary on the lower level. (Dumont 1983a: 166)

In the Dravidian terminologies, on the other hand, 'we find nothing of the sort, the (main) categories . . . stand in neat distinctive opposition', which Dumont (1983a: 166) also calls 'equistatutory opposition'.

Dumont seems never to have considered the third logical possibility, which would be the converse of the North Indian case: affinity repeatedly encompassing consanguinity 'when we ascend from the immediate relationships to wider and wider circles'. This is what I thought was found in Amazonia, especially (but not exclusively) in those locally endogamous, cognatically organized societies in which 'prescriptive alliance' is not supported by any descent construct, a situation first described among the Trio (Rivière 1969a), and afterwards among the Piaroa (Overing Kaplan 1975), the Jivaro (Taylor 1983), the Yanomami (Albert 1985), and other peoples (Viveiros de Castro (ed.) 1995b).

My proposal was not entirely new. Albert, for example, although he did not use the concept of hierarchical opposition, had arrived at something very close to this conclusion in his monograph on the Yanomami. And before that, the idea had been tersely formulated by Joanna Overing in a remark concerning the Piaroa and similar societies:

[W]e must distinguish among those societies that emphasize descent, those that emphasize both descent and alliance, and finally those that stress only alliance as a basic organizing principle. (Overing Kaplan 1975: 2)

This tripartition was meant to point out the theoretical interest of a particular case—the Amazonian—uncovered by the two ethnographic prototypes of the day: the African systems of British social anthropology (descent only) and the Australian and South Asian elementary structures of French structuralism (descent plus alliance). One can read here a distinction phrased in Lévi-Straussian terms, among those post-elementary kinship systems in which alliance is ancillary to the perpetuation of descent groups (relations have a regulative role, being subordinated to their independently constituted 'terms'), those elementary structures where the method of classes prevails (terms and relations are mutually constitutive), and finally those

pre-elementary structures where the method of relations is in force (relations subordinate and constitute terms). But the tripartition can also be rendered into the Dumontian terminology, and read as distinguishing among those societies in which consanguinity encompasses affinity, those in which the two principles stand in an equistatutory relation, and those in which affinity encompasses consanguinity. Such a reading requires that we interpret 'descent' and 'alliance' in Overing's formulation as no more than institutional elaborations of, respectively, consanguinity and affinity taken as the two basic modes of relatedness. This allowed, to say that a society stresses alliance over descent as an institutional principle is tantamount to saying that it stresses affinity over consanguinity as a relational principle.

In my comparative essays on kinship mentioned earlier, I tried to draw all the ethnographically possible consequences (and perhaps a few impossible ones, too) from the idea of affinity as a dominant principle. I decided to call this principle 'potential affinity', in order to distinguish affinity as a generic value from affinity as a particular type of kinship tie. This distinction implies that affinity as generic value is *not* a component or part of 'kinship'. It is, rather, its contrary, and, being the dimension of virtuality of which kinship is the process of actualization, its condition.²

The distinction was forced upon me by a number of considerations. The initial question was the simple one of knowing what happened when one moved from intra-village ('local') to inter-village ('global') interactional and conceptual registers. In the classic *Elementary Structures* model, descent was the principle answering for the internal composition of the exchange units, while alliance took care of the interconnections among them, thereby generating the form and continuity of the global social system. With her Piaroa-inspired model, Overing Kaplan took the decisive step of bringing alliance to the interior of the units themselves, thus making it the principle of constitution and perpetuation of particular groups (endogamous localized kindreds). This shift opened up a whole new way of looking at Amazonian kinship universes, besides permitting a general reconceptualization of 'restricted exchange' systems. It created, however, its own set of problems. Instead of descent-based groups related by a global formula of alliance, we now had alliance-based local groups, but related by what? If alliance works from within, then how are supra-local relations expressed, since it cannot be through—non-existent or rudimentary—descent constructs, nor through simple 'consanguinity'—for the latter is also concentrated in the local group? Were we to accept the traditional anthropological view of primitive society as kinship-based, we would be forced to conclude that 'the society', in a great many Amazonian cases, is synonymous with the local community: the local group is a total group. This would apparently corroborate the xenophobic outlook of sundry Amerindian peoples, who take unrelated persons and members of other groups to be dangerous beings lying beyond the pale of humanity. The 'outside' is pure negativity, or absence of relation. Sociality ends where sociability stops.

One solution Amazonianists provided for the question of supra-locality was to

show that no Amazonian alliance-based local group is an island. In spite of its will to autarky, each community is (or was) at the centre of a web of relations with like groups and other collectives; these relations are given full, even if ambivalent, recognition in native ideologies. This said, such analytical emphasis on the wider sociological frame (the 'tribe', the 'nexus', the 'agglomerate', the 'regional system', etc.) in which the local quasi-monads are embedded does not really solve the problem, insofar as it remains inspired by a traditional concern with social morphological totalization. Even a cursory acquaintance with Amazonian ethnography makes one realize that the 'wider sociological frames' of that area are wide indeed, including far more things than local groups of the same ethnic or linguistic family, and I do not mean here only other tribes, or the large, socio-politically heterogeneous multi-ethnic systems of pre-Columbian South America. The sociological frames go as far as the native sociologies go; and the latter muster a motley crowd of Others, non-human as well as human, which are neither sortable nor totalizable in any obvious way.

The implications of the above are not limited to social morphology. Consider, for instance, the notion of a political economy of persons, repeatedly advanced for Amazonian and similar modes of sociality. It is a very interesting conceit. It takes for granted, however, exactly what it should not: that we know who the persons are, that every people on earth has more or less the same ideas about what qualifies as 'people' (and what qualifies people). But since as a matter of course we do not, what might a political economy of persons mean in worlds like the Amazonian ones, in which there are more persons in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our anthropologies? The question remains open.³

But let us get back to supra-local relations in Amazonia. They form a variable mix: statistically residual (in the endogamous regimes common in this region) but politically strategic intermarriage; formal friendship and trade-partnership links; inter-communal ritual and feasting; physical and spiritual, actual or latent, predatory warfare. In some cases, these different modes may correspond to different levels of supra-locality: inter-village, inter-regional, inter-tribal, inter-ethnic, and so forth. But in many other cases, they intermingle, cross-cut, or oscillate conjuncturally within the same range. Furthermore, this relational complex also straddles 'natural' boundaries: animals, plants, spirits, and divinities are equally engaged in such connective-cum-divisive relations with humans. All these relations, whatever their components, manifest the same general set of values and dispositions, as witness the common idiom in which they are expressed, that of affinity. Guests and friends as much as foreigners and enemies, political allies or clients as much as trade partners or ritual associates, animals as much as spirits, all these kinds of beings bathe, so to speak, in affinity. They are conceived either as generic affines or as marked versions—sometimes inversions—of affines.⁴ The Other is first and foremost an affine.

It should be stressed that this affinization of 'others' occurs in spite of the fact that the vast majority of actual matrimonial alliances take place within the local

group. And at any rate, such alliances cannot but accumulate in the local group, since their concentration defines what a 'local group' is. By this last remark I mean to imply that the situation does not change much when we consider those Amazonian regimes that feature village or descent group exogamy. Potential affinity and its cosmological attendants continue to mark the generic relations with non-allied groups, enemies, animals, and spirits.

Besides these generic, collective relations of 'symbolic' affinity with the outside, there may (or perhaps must) exist a few particularized affinal connections, like those taking place between trade partners, ritual friends, shamans and their animal/spirit associates, or killers and their victims. Such personalized affinal relations (still non-matrimonial, in the sense that they are not based on an actual, or at least intra-human, marriage link) are cosmo-politically strategic, since they serve both as evidence and instrument of the generic relation.

It is this overall configuration that I named potential affinity, or 'affinity without affines'. What is truly important, however, is that such 'symbolic' affinity seems to embody the distinctive qualities of this mode of relatedness more fully than the actual affinal ties that constitute 'the group'. In the context of local-cuncognatic 'prescriptive endogamy' (the expression is Rivière's) prevailing in many societies of the region, affinity as a particular relationship is expurgated of most of the meanings Amazonians attribute to its generic version, being masked or neutralized by consanguinity. Within the community, then, the situation can be described as one of 'affines without affinity'. Terminological ('virtual') affines are seen as types of cognates (namely, close cross-kin), actual affines are attitudinally consanguinized, specifically affinal terms (where they exist) are avoided in favour of their cross-kin alternatives or of tonymonyms expressing co-consanguinity, spouses are conceived as becoming consubstantial by way of sex and commensality, and so forth. We can then say that affinity as a particular relation is virtually eclipsed by consanguinity as part of the process of making kinship. As Rivière observed (1984: 70), 'within the ideal settlement affinity does not exist'.

Rivière's remark undoubtedly expresses an ideal of many Amazonian communities. But I take this as implying that if affinity does not exist within the ideal community, it must then exist somewhere else. Within real settlements, to be sure; but, above all, without the ideal settlement, that is, in the ideal outside of the settlement, as 'ideal' (pure) affinity. For as the perspective (the native's and the analyst's) shifts from local relationships to wider contexts—inter-community ritual and matrimonial relations, inter-group trade and warfare, inter-species hunting and shamanism—the value distribution is inverted, and affinity becomes the overall mode of sociality. Sociality begins where sociability stops.

We have thus seen what puts these Amazonian kin collectives (the so-called local groups) in relation. But this is not enough; we must probe more deeply. In relation to *what* are such collectives defined and constituted? What *makes* such communities 'local'? I suggest they are defined and constituted in relation, not to some global society, but to an infinite background of virtual sociality. And I think they

are made local by the very process of extracting themselves from this background and making, in the most literal sense, their own bodies of kin. These would be the respective meanings of 'affinity' and 'consanguinity' in Amazonia.⁵

I have repeatedly mentioned the value shift that takes place when we 'move' from the proximal to the distal ranges of the relational field. Such phrasings are deeply misleading, however. They express our deep-seated extensionist prejudices, for they presuppose that the movement embodied in Amazonian sociality is from intimate, 'everyday' cognatic sociability (where consanguinity prevails) to wider spheres of a somewhat extra-ordinary nature (where affinity overwhelms). The real situation, I argue, is the opposite: rather than being a metaphorical extension, a semantic and pragmatic attenuation of matrimonial affinity, 'figurative' affinity is the *source* of both 'literal' affinity and the consanguinity the latter breeds. And this because particular relations must be made up of and against generic ones; they are results not starting points. 'Classificatory' kinship relations cannot be thought of as projections of 'real' ones; rather, the latter are special, that is, particularized, reductions of the former.⁶ In Amazonia, a real or close consanguine (which does *not* mean a 'biological' consanguine, 'ethno-' or otherwise) is certainly 'more consanguineal' than a classificatory or distant one, but a classificatory affine is more affinal than a real one. This suggests that Amazonian consanguinity and affinity are not so much taxonomically discontinuous categories, but, rather, zones of intensity within a single scalar field. In this field, the movement is not from the proximal to the distal, the ordinary to the extraordinary, but quite the contrary. Something extra must be summoned to bring forth the ordinary.

The real significance of the conception of affinity as the given does not lie in its kinship-typological incidences (which may not necessarily obtain). This idea can be understood as a privileged instantiation of the general ontological premises underlying Amazonian worlds.⁷ The first and foremost of such presuppositions is that difference precedes and encompasses identity; the latter is a special case of the former. Just as cold is relative 'absence' of heat but not vice versa (heat is a quantity which has no negative state), identity is relative absence of difference but not vice versa. This is the same as saying that there exists difference alone, in greater or smaller 'amount'; the nature of the value measured is difference. In kinship terms, taking 'kinship' as a shorthand for what, in Amazonia, would perhaps be more aptly described as a 'theory of general relationality', this means that consanguinity (identity) is a limit point of affinity (difference). A limit point in the strict sense of the term, since it is never attained. What kinship measures or calculates in Amazonia is the coefficient of affinity in relationships, which cannot reach a zero-state, for, as we shall see, there is no total consanguineal identity between any two persons.⁸ In fact, not even individual persons are perfectly identical to themselves, since they are not individuals, at least while they are alive.

So the cardinal rule of this ontology is: no relation without differentiation. In socio-practical terms, this means that the parties to any relationship are related insofar as they are different from one another. They are related through their

difference, and become different as they engage in their relationship. But is this not what affinity is precisely about? For affinity is a relationship the terms of which are *not* related in the same way to the linking term: my 'sister' is your 'wife', and so on. What unites two affines is what distinguishes them. This would explain why affinity is such a powerful symbol of relatedness in Amazonia. It is a symbol 'far transcending a simple expression of relationship', or, in other words, a symbol which 'transcends' kinship as such. While the Other in Western social cosmology is rescued from abstract indeterminacy when we pose him as a *brother*, that is, as someone related to me insofar as we are both identically related to a third, superior term (the parents, the nation, the church, etc.), the Amazonian Other must be determined as a brother-in-law (Kertzenheim 1992: 91). Relation as identity, relation as alterity.

But then, how does consanguinity enter the picture? Well, it must, precisely, 'enter', for it is not already there as a *given*. Since affinity is the fundamental state of the relational field, then something must be *done*, a certain amount of energy must be spent to create pockets of consanguineal valence there. Consanguinity must purposefully be carved out of affinity, made to emerge from the affinal background as an 'intentional' (i.e. intentional) differentiation from universally given difference. But then it can only be the ever incomplete outcome of a process of depotentialization of affinity, its reduction to and through marriage. And that is the meaning the expression 'potential affinity' is supposed to convey: affinity as the generic given, the virtual background out of which a particularized figure of consanguineally dominated kinship sociality must be made to appear. Kinship is constructed, not given, because what *is* given is (potential) affinity.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF KINSHIP

My reliance on the notion of hierarchical opposition was first and foremost a direct consequence of the nature of the materials I was initially concerned with, that is, kinship terminologies of the 'two-section' type canonically described by Dumont. Since Dumont proposed the concept of hierarchical opposition to account for other—in fact, all—aspects of Indian society, his denial of its applicability to Dravidian kinship is intriguing, the more so as he used the very same concept to mount a devastating attack on the 'equistatutory' interpretations of socio-cosmological dualisms by Needham and his associates.⁹ Dumont's argument that classificatory oppositions always carry a value asymmetry is, to my mind, correct and undeniable. To apply this argument to the critic himself, at least with respect to the Amazonian version of the Dravidianate schema, was, therefore, an obvious step to take. Furthermore, I was attracted to the notion of hierarchical opposition, in which I saw an interesting sociological application of the Praguean-linguistic concept of markedness. The importance of this concept for anthropology cannot be overemphasized. My thesis that affinity is hierarchically superior to consanguinity essentially means that the former is the unmarked category in

Amazonia, standing for 'relatedness' in a generic context, while the latter is the marked category or relational quality. Consanguinity is *non-affinity* before being anything else.¹⁰

Hierarchical opposition, however, is not an easy concept to handle in the Amazonian context. The difficulty comes from the fact that the Dumontian approach has its roots in the problematics of totality. As I was trying to establish a somewhat paradoxical regime of 'anti-totalization' in which the outside encompassed the inside, but without thereby creating simply a greater inside, I had no other option but to apply the concept of hierarchy to Amazonian materials in a way that deliberately distorted the Dumontian meaning. The challenge was to avoid ending up with a figure that 'contained' both the inside and the outside as different levels of a single whole, for such an outcome would have been equivalent to positing the outside as a wider milieu of interiority.¹¹

This is, I believe, an important issue. In the hands of Dumont, encompassment defines the characteristic of a 'Totality'—the society as cosmos—in which differences are nested within a superordinate holistic unity. Indeed, such structure has no exterior, for hierarchical encompassment is an operation not unlike the notorious dialectical sublation: a movement of inclusive synthesis, of subsumption of difference by identity.¹² Difference not only occupies the inner space of the 'whole', but it is also inferior to the whole. The general emphasis of Amazonian ethnology on the cosmologically constitutive role of alterity, in contrast, refers to a regime in which encompassment does not produce or manifest a superior metaphysical unity. There is no higher-order identity between difference and identity, just difference all the way. The subsumption of the inside by the outside, characteristic of the Amazonian cosmological process, specifies a structure in which the inside is a mode of the outside. As such, it can only constitute itself by, as it were, stepping out of the outside. To be true to its encompassed condition of being 'inside' the outside, the inside must become the 'outside' of the outside, an achievement of precarious nature. The Amazonian hierarchical synthesis is disjunctive, not conjunctive. Accordingly, the argument that the enemy is 'included in society' does not so much imply that the Other is ultimately a kind of Self, but, rather, that the Self is initially a figure of the Other.¹³

Let me be clear about this internal or inclusive role played by alterity. Internality in an ontological sense (i.e. otherness as a constitutive relation) is not the same thing as internality in a mereological sense (i.e. the other as part of a social or cosmological whole). In some respects, the first means the very opposite of the second. It is because alterity is an internal relation that one can say, without really indulging in paradox, that some Amazonian societies have no interior (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 4). The point about the outside encompassing the inside is *not* about the latter being 'within' the former, but, rather, about the outside being *immanent* in the inside.¹⁴ The corollary of such immanence is that any arbitrarily chosen point of the 'inside' is a boundary between an inside and an outside: there is no absolute milieu of interiority. Reciprocally, any region of the outside is a possible

pole of interiority.¹⁵ The Dumontian language of 'wholes' and 'encompassment' is somewhat awkward in that it allows for a confusion between the two meanings of internality, especially when the cosmic values under discussion have a topological expression, as is the case in Amazonia.

I am not suggesting that we should shun any notion of totality as hopelessly un-Amazonian, but simply that we should be wary of a possible fallacy of misplaced wholeness. Any cosmology is by definition total in the sense that it cannot but think everything that is, and think it (this everything that is not a Whole, or this whole that is not One) according to a limited number of fundamental presuppositions; holistic approaches are thus amply justified. But it does not follow that every cosmology thinks everything that is within the category of totality, or that it poses a totality as the 'objective correlative' of its own virtual exhaustiveness. Accordingly, I venture to suggest that in Amazonian cosmologies the whole is not (the) given, nor is it the sum of the given and the constructed. The 'whole' is, rather, the constructed, that which humans strive to bring forth by means of a reduction of the Given as the anti-whole or pure universal relation (difference).

What I have in mind is something like the following structure.¹⁶ Once supposed (i.e. given 'by construction'), affinity immediately poses non-affinity, for the first, as a principle of difference, carries its own internal difference, rather than embodying a transcendent unitarian whole. Non-affinity is an indeterminate value, as its marked status testifies. As I stated above, consanguinity is non-affinity before being anything else. But in order for this non-affinal value to become 'something else' (i.e. a determinate quality), it must proceed by reciprocally and actively extruding affinity from itself, affinity being the only *positive* value available (that is, given). Non-affinity is thus internally differentiated into affinity and non-affinity. It is always possible, however, to extrude yet 'more' affinity from non-affinity so as to further determine the latter as consanguinity. In fact, it is necessary to do so, because the internal differentiation of non-affinity reproduces affinity by the very process of extruding it. It is through the reiterated exclusion of affinity at each level of contrast that consanguinity appears as including it at the next level; affinity is thus disseminated downwards to the inner reaches of the structure. This recursive process of 'obviation' (Wagner 1978) of affinity, otherwise known as *the construction of kinship*, must remain unfinished forever; pure consanguinity is not attainable, for it means the end of kinship. It is a sterile state of non-relationality, a state of pure indifference, by which the 'construction' deconstructs itself (see Fig. 2.1). Affinity is the principle of instability responsible for the continuity of the life-process of kinship, or, to put it differently, consanguinity cannot but be the continuation of affinity by other means.

Figure 2.1 represents a 'structuring' rather than a 'structural' model, in the sense that it sets the conditions for the constitution of a value (kinship), rather than describing a constituted organizational form. It is therefore quite different from the standard Dumontian hierarchy, which articulates well-determined values from the start.¹⁷ It looks more like what Houseman (1984) calls anti-extensive hierarchy,

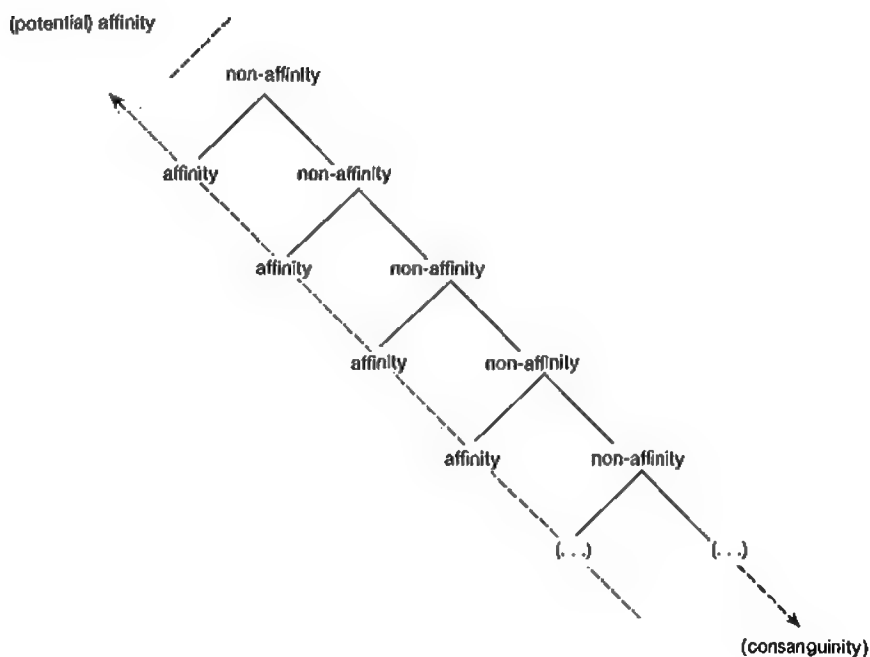


FIG. 2.1. The Amazonian construction of kinship

a configuration in which the marked 'anti-extension' (non-affinity) of the unmarked dominant principle (affinity) includes at a lower level the dominant principle as its own *marked* version. As the dominant principle is inherently *unmarked*, such inclusion creates an irresolvable internal tension that simultaneously drives the subordinate principle towards ever further particularized actualizations and generates a counter-current of ever broader ascending generalizations directed to the dominant principle. Thus, every downward-branching triangle (originating in the right diagonal) separates two nodes of the value embodied in the upper vertex, while the lower vertex of every upward-branching triangle (originating in the left diagonal) connects between the two opposed values lying above it. As the two diagonals are oriented, both the particularizing separations and the generalizing connections are asymmetric or hierarchic, but with inverse markedness: the way up is not the way down. In short, the dualism of affinity and consanguinity is in *perpetual disequilibrium*.

GETTING AMAZONIA IN THE GUT

I chose the phrase 'perpetual disequilibrium' to bring our discussion on firm Americanist ground. As is well known, Lévi-Strauss (1991) characterized the

moving principle of the Amerindian cosmological process in precisely these terms: a dualism in perpetual or dynamic disequilibrium. The name of Lévi-Strauss usually evokes a strong partiality towards static, reversible, and symmetrically binary oppositions. This image, however, better fits some 'British' versions of the structuralist paradigm. Lévi-Strauss himself pointed very early on to the precarious nature of the symmetry exhibited by socio-cosmological dualities. It is hardly necessary to recall the points made in his famous article on dual organizations: the static quality of diatetric dualism as a formal structure; the asymmetric values often attributed to diametric partitions as lived structures; the implicit or explicit combination of diametric and concentric forms of dualism; the derivability of the former from the latter; the triadic origin of concentric dualism, and its dynamic quality; finally and more generally, the derivative status of binary oppositions in relation to ternary structures.

One essential aspect of Lévi-Strauss's concentric model is its openness to the exterior. On the one hand, diametric dualisms define a self-contained whole cut off from the outside by an uncrossable boundary, a dimensional barrier heterogeneous to the internal meridian line. From the standpoint of the system, its exterior simply does not exist.¹⁸ The exterior of the concentric model, on the other hand, is immanent in it: 'The system is not self-sufficient, and its frame of reference is always the environment' (Lévi-Strauss 1958: 168). The outside is therefore an internal, defining feature of the whole structure, or, to be more accurate, it is the feature that actively prevents the structure from becoming a whole. The 'concentric' outside is relative, and this makes the inside relative as well. Concentric dualism brings indetermination to the very core of the self (i.e. to the centre) rather than rejecting it towards the outer darkness of non-being. After all, geometrically speaking, the centre is but the inferior limit of the infinity of circles that can be drawn around it.¹⁹

The dependence of concentric dualism upon its own exterior is related to another famous openness: the 'opening to the Other' proper to the Amerindian bipartite ideology (Lévi-Strauss 1991: 16). The concept of this *ouverture à l'Autre* was directly derived from the dualism in perpetual disequilibrium displayed by the reference myth of *Histoire de L'Ynã*: the 'Tupinamba Genesis' recorded by Thevet circa 1554. I trust Fig. 2.1 did not fail to bring to the reader's mind the diagram of the successive bipartitions that span the entire myth (Figure 2.2).

We are now in a position to see that the dynamic dualism of 1991 is simply a transformation of the concentric model of 1956. Note that *Histoire de L'Ynã*'s two-way splits start at the outermost reaches of the system, proceeding downwards, or, in the terminology used in the older concentric model, *inwards*. The further we move down the cascading proliferation of ever smaller distinctions in the dynamic schema, the nearer we are getting to the centre of the concentric model, the point where the 'Self' lies as an entity of infinite comprehension and null extension, or pure identity. But of course we never get there, for the centre's pure identity is purely imaginary. The centre is a limit of convergence, just like the 'consanguinity' of the kinship diagram in Fig. 2.1.

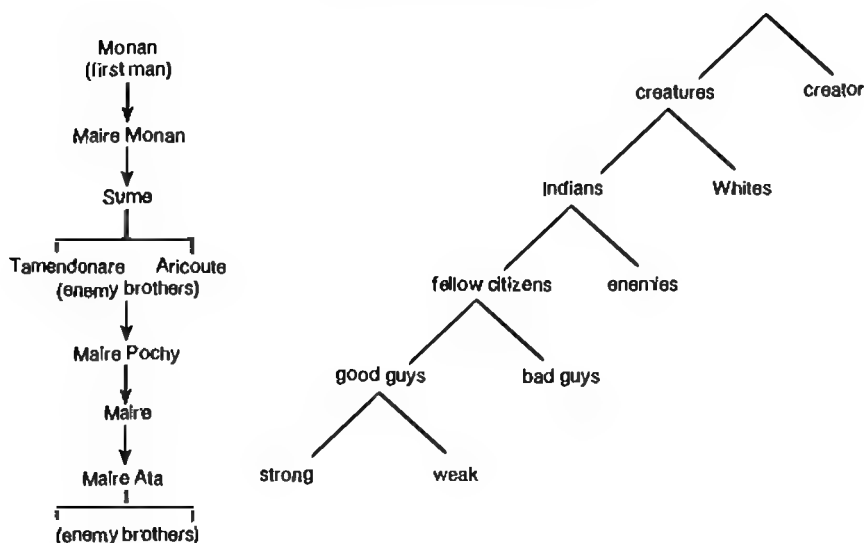


FIG. 2.2. 'Two-way splits in the Tupinamba myth (from Lévi-Strauss 1991: 76)

Figs. 2.1 and 2.2 not only carry exactly the same message in slightly different codes, but they represent the same structure. This will perhaps be made more evident if we attribute a specific interpretation to each level of the affinity/non-affinity diagram. Thecheheina in Fig. 2.3, for example, models a syncretically 'ideal' Amazonian morphology of the type first described by Rivière.

Note, first of all, that Fig. 2.3 describes a single process encompassing inter-personal and intra-personal relations. The construction of the person is coextensive with the construction of sociality: both are based on the same dualism in perpetual disequilibrium between self-consanguineal and other-affinal poles. Intra-personal and inter-personal relations are also 'co-intensive', in the sense that the person cannot be conceived as a part of a social whole, but as its version on the individual scale, just as the *socius* is the person on a collective scale. In other words, this structure is fractal: a distinction between part and whole is meaningless.²⁰ It follows that the distance between the 'individualist' socialities of Guiana and the 'collectivist' socialities of Central Brazil may be shorter than we all used to imagine.

The upper half of the figure is self-explanatory; its lower part needs some elaboration. The opposition of 'e/y sibling' and 'self' can be justified on the basis of the idea that Amazonian (same-sex) siblingship is almost always marked by a principle of relative age. It conveys a notion of diachronic and differential instantiation rather than total synchronic identification; it is also never free from a residuum of potential affinity.²¹ There is more to this, though. We could have added an intermediary

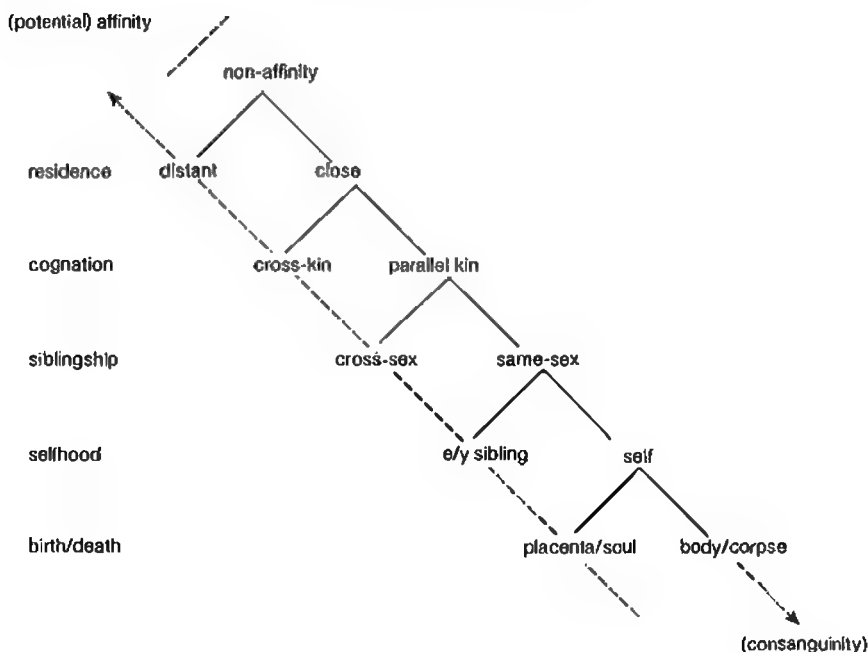


FIG. 2.3. Bipartitions of Amazonian kinship

step in the diagram, opposing a pole labelled 'twin' to the 'e/y sibling' pole, instead of having the latter confront directly the 'self' pole. With the 'twin' pole, we would have reached the lowest possible limit of inter-personal difference, since twinship is the extreme case of consanguineal identity: the absolute zero of affinal temperature, as it were. As Lévi-Strauss argued in *Histoire de Lynx*, however, twins are not conceived as identical in Amerindian thought, but rather as beings that *must* be differentiated. Either they are both killed at birth (which sets the score back to nil), or one of the twins is killed (which creates an absolute difference between the two), or both are spared, but in this case they are distinguished by their order of appearance (hence transformed into a e/y sibling pair). In indigenous mythologies, in which twins abound, two other strategies are envisaged: the twins have two different fathers, which makes them different from the start, or the narrative takes as its very theme their progressive differentiation. Therefore, even when they are indiscernible at birth, mythic twins always drift towards difference, thereby reproducing the self/other polarity. Twinship constitutes what we could call the *least common multiple* in Amerindian thought.²²

Twinship and its internal 'oddness' allow us to proceed one step down in our diagram, and reach the intra-personal level, which I have sketchily divided in a 'placenta/soul' pole and a 'body/corpse' one. Let me start here by recalling that

the placenta is often conceived as a double of the newborn, a kind of *dead twin*, or as the non-human Other of the child (Govv 1997: 48; Karadiñas 1997: 81). In some mythological traditions, the placenta gives rise to an actual, and very antagonistic, twin (Guss 1989: 54). As to the opposition between 'placenta' and 'body/corpse', note that the placenta and the body are often opposed in terms of their spatio-temporal movements, the former going down (buried) and rotting, so that the latter can rise and thrive. It seems that the placenta is being conceived of as a kind of counter-corpse (C. Hugh-Jones 1979: 128–9), or as a body with its inside out (as the exteriorized entrails of the child; see Govv 1997).

The body/soul division manifests the same polarity. Like the placenta, the soul is a separable aspect of the person, or a double, that is, a twin. One's own soul is never really one's 'own'; being the other side of the person, it is also the side of the Other.²³ Placenta and soul, incidentally, are also temporally correlated: the separation of the first marks the beginning of humanization, that of the latter its end. The soul, like the placenta and the odd twins, is clearly located in the 'other-affinal' pole of the diagram. We touch here the relationally constituted core, or nuclear relation, of the person. The Amazonian construction of kinship concerns essentially the fabrication (and destruction) of *bodies*, while 'souls' are not made, but *given*: either absolutely during conception, or transmitted along with names and other pre-constituted principles, or captured ready-made from the outside. The soul is the eminently alienable, because eminently alien, part of the Amazonian person: it is 'given' and, thus, can be taken.

We have just seen that not even twins are perfectly consanguineal. Does this mean that an individual person becomes consanguineal reflexively, that is, for instance, once he/she is separated from his/her placental Other? I do not think this is the case. A living person is 'dividual' (i.e. body *and* soul) and internally constituted by a self/other, or consanguine/affine polarity (Kelly 1999; Taylor 2000 and this volume). This composite entity is decomposed by death, which separates the principle of 'affinal' otherness, the soul, from the principle of 'consanguineal' sameness, the dead body. Unalloyed consanguinity can only be reached in death: it is the final result of the life-process of kinship, just as pure affinity is the cosmological precondition of the latter. Death splits the dividual person, or reveals its divided essence: as disembodied souls, the dead are paradigmatically affinal (as classically demonstrated by Carneiro da Cunha (1978)); as 'de-souled' bodies, however, they are supremely consanguineal. Therefore, death simultaneously undoes the tension (the difference of potential) between affinity and consanguinity that triggers the construction of kinship among the living, and completes the process of consanguinization, i.e. de-affinization, to which it corresponds.

Said differently, the oriented but cyclical structure schematized in Fig. 2.3 depicts the cosmological movement of transformation of affinity (alterity) into consanguinity (identity) and back again. The process of kinship requires the progressive particularization of general difference through the constitution of *bodies of kin* (the kin-fabricated singular body and the bodily instituted kin collective) as

concretions of shared consanguinal identity within the universally given field of potential affinity. But the life-process of kinship ends each cycle with the production of a totally self-identical entity, the dead body, which is also completely different from everything else: it is pure substantive singularity. The 'other', relational rather than substantial, part of the person is represented by the soul, which may have a number of (alternative or sequential) posthumous affinal determinations: it may become an enemy of the living relatives of the deceased; it may take a non-human body as its dwelling; it may be passed on to non-consubstantial relatives; or it may become a generic principle of free subjecthood, a kind of universal ontological equivalent, the measure of all meaningful difference.²⁴

There is of course another end-product of kinship at the close of each cycle: the procreated child, who completes the consanguinization process initiated by the marriage of its parents. This new body and soul dividual is never a consanguineal replica of its procreators, for its body mixes the bodies of its parents, hence of two male affines (see Taylor 2000 and this volume), and its soul/name must come from a non-parent: minimally, from an 'anti-parent', that is, the parent's parent or the parent's opposite-sex sibling.²⁵ Most importantly, this dividual child has to be *made* a relative by its parents, since Amazonian substantial identifications are a consequence of social relations rather than the other way around.²⁶ This means that the child has to be 'de-affinalized': it is a stranger-guest who must be turned into a consubstantial kin (Gow 1997; Rival 1998b). The construction of kinship is the deconstruction of potential affinity; but the reconstruction of kinship at the end of each life cycle through procreation must rely on the affinal givenness of human sociality.

EXAMPLES

All of the above would obviously benefit from a lot of fine-tuning. Meanwhile, it is not hard to find other ethnographic expressions of this general 'Amazonian' structure, which need not be directly coded in terms of kinship categories. The following examples come to my mind as I write:

1. The model of Kalapalo kinship terminology proposed by Basso (1973: 79), which could receive a Dumontian-hierarchical rather than ethnoscientific-taxonomical interpretation, especially if one considers the reversal of siblingship into cross-cousinship as the default relational idiom when one moves from intra-village everyday contexts to inter-village relations, and, in particular, to the great pan-village rituals, which, noteworthy, construct 'Xingó society' as a maximally inclusive unit.

2. The systematic gender associations carried by the right-downward and left-upward diagonal lines of the diagram when the latter is 'applied' to Achuar sociality. Pure consanguinity seems only to be attainable by and among women, just as pure affinity is a male condition. These divergent pulls generate an overall kinship dynamics excellently analysed by Taylor (1983, 2000, and this volume).

3. The trajectories described by the Barasana rituals of 'Fruit House' (left-upwards) and 'He House' (right-downwards), which, incidentally, invert the distribution of gender values found in the Achuar case (S. Hugh-Jones 1993).²⁷

4. The foregrounding of the consanguine/affine division (backgrounded in the life-process of kinship) effected in Wari' funerary endocannibalism (Vilaça 1992). It is tempting to speculate that the *affines* of the deceased are the ones who must eat the corpse precisely because this object represents the person in a state of pure consanguinity. The soul, in its turn, goes out on an affinally marked journey to the Beyond and finally becomes a wild pig that may be killed and eaten by the *consanguines* of the deceased.

5. 'The Piro construction of sociality as a deliberate 'mixing of blood' (Govv 1991). Starting from a state of pure potential affinity between different 'peoples', history unfolds as the very process of kinship. So we could also read our structure as describing the movement from myth (mythically given affinity) to history (historically constructed consanguinity), and back again. This macro-process is recursively reproduced in the micro-oscillations between identity and alterity which constitute the life cycle (Govv 1997).

6. The Araweté cosmological circulation between the *Maĩ* and the living. Fig. 2.4 combines two diagrams presented in my monograph (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 251, 253); they are the direct 'ancestors' of the structure proposed in this essay.²⁸

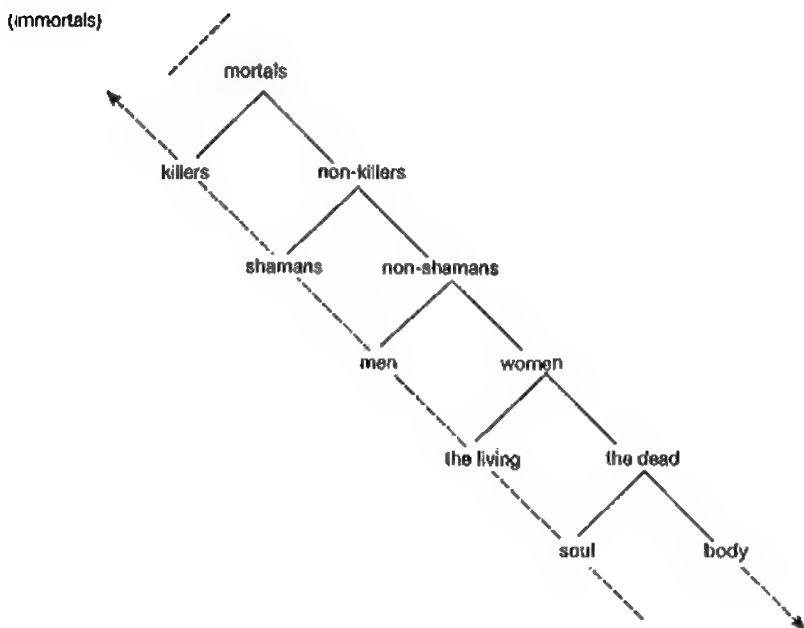


FIG. 2.4. Araweté socio-cosmological bipartitions

7. The Tupinamba and Jivaroan cannibalistic and *tsantsa* rituals, which involve a multiple splitting of the person into self-consanguineal and enemy-affinal 'halves' (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 287–92; Taylor 1993). More generally, the Amazonian processes of incorporation of the 'other' by the 'self', or, to be more accurate, the processes of determination of the 'self' by the 'other' that have been described by authors such as Taylor (1985, 1993), Vilaça (1992), Fausto (1997), or Kelly (1999), could be modelled along the lines of our structure. The latter can be made to represent the dynamics of predation as much as that of potential affinity, since they are one and the same, as I have often argued. Consider, for instance, Fig. 2.5. It is undoubtedly too schematic and needs substantial adjusting. However, its implications are clear.

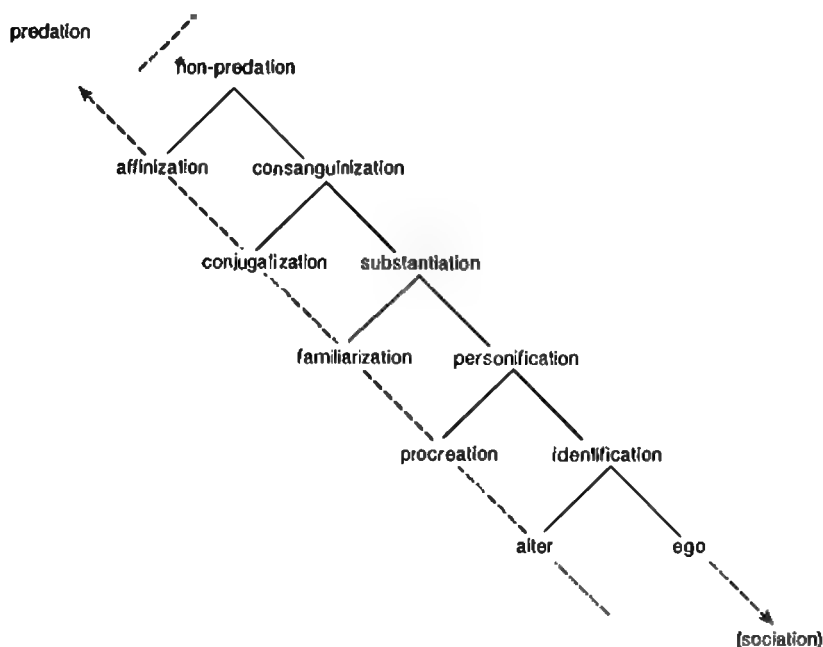


FIG. 2.5. The 'assimilation' of the Other

8. Last but not least, the model(s) of Kayapó social structure elaborated by Turner (1979b, 1984, 1992). Fig. 2.6 is a possible schematization of a far richer ethnographic analysis.²⁹

If one accepts the schema displayed in Fig. 2.6, one might first wish to note that 'nature' encompasses 'society' (in the immanent sense discussed above) in Gê cosmology. Indeed, as Turner seems to be arguing in his more recent work, the ritual construction of society, that is, its determination 'against' its initially derived, marked condition of non-nature, must appeal to the powers of the

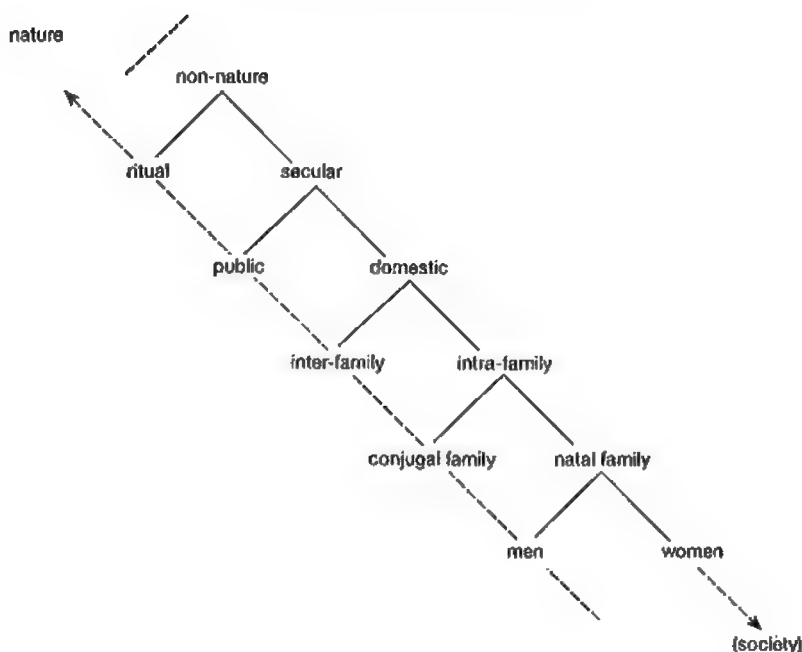


FIG. 2.6. Kayapó social structure (from T. Turner)

Outside. Consequently, and contrary to common belief, Gê social structure is not a closed system, after all. It is, instead, rather similar to the overall Amazonian socio-cosmological landscape (Ewart 2000). Furthermore, one might argue that in Gê cosmology women are not 'natural' in any simple sense of the term. What the diagram suggests, quite to the contrary, is that a pure, totally self-sufficient state of sociality would be synonymous to an exclusively female-constituted and reproduced world. This is what Gê uxori-locality is all about, I guess.

By way of conclusion, let me remark that whereas some Amazonian societies (and/or their ethnographers) seem to put great cultural stress on the downward diagonal of my meta-diagram (i.e. the consanguineally oriented vector of the process of kinship), others keep their eyes, so to speak, firmly set on the general source and condition of the process: potential affinity. Such differences in orientation within a single cosmological frame might account for the contrasts that are continuously surfacing in the ethnography of this region: peacefulness versus bellicosity, emphasis on sharing mutuality versus emphasis on predatory reciprocity, social introversion versus extroversion, this-worldly versus other-worldly speculative leanings, and so forth. These contrasts cannot but surface: they are,

properly speaking, superficial. For all their 'gut feeling' salience, they are just partial readings of one and the same general structure that must needs have it *both ways*.

Still, the way up is not the way down.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A modified version of this chapter has recently been published in Portuguese in the Brazilian journal *ILHA*.

NOTES

1. My argument copies directly from Wagner (1981), who states that in a semiotic regime in which human conventions are inscribed as primordial givens in the constitution of the universe, what lies outside convention is given over to invention, falling within the province of human creative intervention. The decisive step of the argument is the second one, for the first more or less echoes the received (though not necessarily false) anthropological wisdom about the naturalization of culture or society by pre-modern, 'animist' peoples. If culture is naturalized, then nature is culturalized, that is, its 'differentiation' becomes the responsibility of humans. An Amazonian version of this cosmological chiasmus was reinvented by myself, with a specific emphasis on the 'deictic' value of indigenous correlates of our nature and culture dualism (see Viveiros de Castro 1998a; the original version of that paper, published in Portuguese in 1996, was written in total oblivion of *The Invention of Culture*, which I had read fifteen years previously without understanding much of it).
2. See Viveiros de Castro 1993. The term I coined for this concept was not particularly felicitous. I contrasted 'potential affinity' not only to matrimonially created 'actual affinity' (brothers-in-law, for example), but also to 'virtual affinity' (e.g. cross-cousins, who are terminological affines in Dravidianate systems). The problem of course was that 'potential' and 'virtual' meant 'virtually' the same thing in the literature; the first term had often been used to designate what I called virtual affinity (potential affinity was not differentiated from it as a type of relationship in its own right). Perhaps a better choice would have been something like 'meta-affinity', by analogy with the *metagermanité* (meta-siblingship) proposed by Jamous (1991) to characterize the kinship matrix of the Meo of Northern India. The parallel is relevant, since Meo meta-siblingship (closely related to the *blai* example evoked in the quotation from Dumont above) is the consanguineal (and cross-sex) analogue of the Amazonian hierarchical (and same-sex) meta-affinity. Taylor (2000: 312 n. 6) has recently proposed a cross-naming of the virtual/potential contrast, a suggestion I find quite defensible. However, as my distinction has made its way into the Amazonianist literature, I feel somehow obliged to honour it, or at least to stick to the adjective 'potential' (which I still find full of, how should I put it, potential), while dropping the word 'virtual' when referring to cognatically given affinity. I now prefer to use 'virtual' to designate the pre-cosmological background from which potential affinity derives (see below).

3. For the concept of a political economy of people, see, for instance Wagner (1981: 24–6), Meillassoux (1980 [1975]), Turner (1979*b*), Gregory (1982), and Rivière (1984: 87–100). These authors give different names to the concept and have somewhat different notions of what 'political economy' and 'person' mean. Their overall emphasis, however, is on the production and circulation of subjects in society, not of organisms in nature. There is thus no compelling reason to restrict the extension of 'people' or 'person' to our own species. Such restriction may be derived from an implicit reliance on the notion of biological reproduction, which is reproduced at a metabiological (if not metaphysical) level as the so-called 'social production of persons'.
4. As an example of inversion, see the Araweté spouse-swapping ritual friends, who are 'anti-affines' without being 'consanguines' (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 167–78).
5. The remainder of the chapter provides a very sketchy elaboration of this idea, which I hope to develop elsewhere. What I am calling the 'infinite background of virtual sociality' finds its fullest expression in Amerindian mythology, which describes the actualization of the present state of affairs as the break-up of a pre-cosmos endowed with *absolute transparency*, by which I mean a 'time' or condition in which the corporeal and spiritual dimensions of beings were still mutually and simultaneously accessible. In this pre-cosmological state, rather than an original indifferenciation between humans and non-humans, what prevails is *infinite* difference, but difference that is *internal* to every primordial character or agent (as opposed to the finite and external differences that make up the actualized, present-day world). This is expressed in the regime of 'metamorphosis', or qualitative multiplicity, characteristic of myth. It is impossible to decide whether the Jaguar of the myth, for example, is a bundle of human affections in feline shape, or a bundle of feline affections in human shape, since metamorphosis is an 'event' or a 'becoming' (i.e. an intensive superposition of states) rather than a 'process' of 'change' (i.e. an extensive transposition of states). Mythic narratives usually end with the separation of such pre-cosmological flows once the latter enter the cosmological process. Thenceforth, the human and the jaguar in/of the jaguar (and in/of the human) will alternately function as figure and ground to each other. The absolute *transparency* of mythic 'time' bifurcates into a dimension of relative *invisibility* (the 'soul') and one of relative *opacity* (the 'body'). Potential affinity goes back to this background of metamorphic sociality. The great Amerindian origin myths of culture always have their central *dramatis personae* related by trans-specific affinity: the 'human' hero and the 'vulture' father-in-law, the 'peccary' brothers-in-law, the 'manioc' daughter-in-law, and so forth. Human kinship 'originates' from these transnatural alliances, but must never let itself be sucked back into them, thence the effort embodied in rituals like the *covade*, which strive to sever the potential connections between the newborn and pre-cosmological transparency. In this sense, the *covade* is as much 'about' keeping body and soul *united* (as in the classic interpretation of Rivière 1974*a*) as about keeping body and soul *distinct*.
6. This is a general theoretical remark. Immediate or 'real' kinship ties are necessary for the fabrication of classificatory links and categories; they function as material and efficient causes. But reciprocally, so-called classificatory links are necessary for the institution of those same immediate kin-ties and of kinship in general; they are formal and final causes, and as such are presupposed by the first order of causality. The old quarrel between extensionists and categorialists boils down to this. The first believe that the (necessarily particular) fabrication also fabricates the (necessarily general) institution,

which is clearly false. The second make the opposite mistake, or rather, they do not see the distinction. These considerations will be developed in another context. Let me just note here that the distinction between fabrication and institution could be fruitfully applied to an apparently very different debate, that opposing 'projectionist' and 'immanentist' interpretations of animic cosmologies: the first posing that the anthropomorphization of non-human entities proceeds by the extension of human predicates to non-humans, the second refusing the notion of anthropomorphism and arguing that personhood is an immediate, substantial property of both human and non-human entities.

7. My point here is similar to Schrempf's (1992: 88–98) about Maori kinship as instantiating a more general and properly cosmological notion of form, rather than being a constitutive category in itself. What constitutes a particular kinship form must lie outside of kinship.
8. If one wishes to pursue the hot/cold image, one could say that affinity and consanguinity as expressed in kinship terminologies are conventional measures of relational 'temperature', but what is being measured is a certain relational 'heat' embodied in affinity. There is a conventionally negative affinal temperature, namely terminological consanguinity, but there is no negative affinal energy.
9. See Dumont (1983b) and Needham (1973). Needham's interest in dual symbolic classifications was related to his earlier work on two-section terminologies and their 'total structural' implications.
10. What I mean is that Amazonian consanguinity needs affinity to be defined, but the reverse is not true; consanguinity is a mode of affinity, while the latter is axiomatically primitive. It is important to note that this is *not* a semantic argument about the lexical structure of terminologies. It is in such limited sense that the concept of markedness entered the anthropology of kinship (Scheffler 1984). Dumont's remark about the Northern/Southern Indian difference is also couched in purely lexical terms, although he clearly means something of more general import. In the Amazonian case, I see no overwhelming signs of the unmarked status of affinal terms. If anything, it is the opposite that obtains, as in those terminologies showing a consanguineally biased neutralization of the consanguine/affine contrast in GØ. Otherwise, consanguineal and affinal terms are equally primary and non-neutralizable: an 'equistatutory' situation if we restrict ourselves to the lexical structure. So the Amazonian terminological landscape does not contradict the (debatable) thesis about the universally marked status of affinal and cross-collateral terms as against consanguineal and parallel ones (see Hage 1999). But, as I said, my point is not lexical. It concerns the pragmatics of kinship usages, the range of application of consanguineal and affinal terms, and the socio-cosmological values embodied in these two categories. Above all, it implies that the marked status of affinal terms within the domain of kinship is evidence that kinship as such is a marked (particular) mode of sociality as against the general, unmarked value of Otherness embodied in 'potential affinity'.
11. It is perhaps worth recalling that the spatial inscription of Amazonian socio-cosmological values, and the consequent emphasis on the distinction between the 'outside' and the 'inside', was first developed by Lévi-Strauss (1958) in the context of his discussion of concentric and diametric dualisms. But it was in Rivièr's book on the Trio that the contrast received its first ethnographic elaboration (Rivièr 1969a: ch. X, 'Inside and out').

12. I am aware that Dumont would disagree with this. He had often contrasted hierarchical encompassment to dialectical totalization (see the discussion in Houseman 1984: 305-6). But the distinction is not that easy to make (see for instance the deliberate conflation of the two figures by Turner (1984)), and in any case both modes of bringing in the whole fail to account for Amazonian cosmological operations.
13. See Viveiros de Castro (1992: 282-301). In my previous dealings with Dumontian matters, I occasionally slipped into a literal-minded application of the model and searched for 'the whole society'. This was certainly a mistake. Lost in between the everydayness of sociability and the everywhere-ness of sociality, 'society' is not very much of a concern for Amazonians; this makes it a problematic and fuzzy object. Where it does seem to emerge as a focal reification, such as among Central Brazilian peoples for instance, it can be accounted for as the output of a process of pre-emption of both intra-domestic sociability and trans-specific sociality. I am extending here the well-known argument of Terence Turner about the communal level of Jê societies being a transformation of domestic relations. Turner moves 'up' from the domestic to establish the communal; I am suggesting we should also move 'down' to that level. The public sphere is built up with the shreds and patches of the domestic and the cosmic. But since the 'domestic' is itself a particularized transformation of the 'cosmic', there is perhaps just one single basic movement.
14. If we consider the concentric topology of Amazonian socialities from an extensional point of view, it is quite obvious (even tautological) that the 'interior' is located in the 'exterior', since the inside sits inside the outside as naturally as, for example, a fish swims in the sea. But if we look at things from an intensional point of view, it is the other way around: the exterior lies within the interior, like the sea which dwells within the fish, making it a figure of (and not simply in) the sea. It is the sea 'within' which makes the sea 'without' a constitutive condition of the fish, or, to put it differently, it is the sea within which makes a fish die (i.e. cease to be a fish) once extracted from the sea without.
15. To pursue the image of the preceding note, this is the same as saying that in every drop of the sea there swims a virtual fish (which is one way of summarizing Amerindian 'perspectivism'; see Viveiros de Castro 1998a).
16. If the word 'structure' makes the reader wince, let him/her by all means put something else in its place--may I suggest 'process'? In the present case, it amounts to exactly the same, since what this structure structures is a process, and what this process processes is a structure.
17. In the standard or 'extensive' hierarchical model the dominant value includes its subordinate contrary as part of its own extension: 'Man' includes 'man' and 'woman', and so forth. As the standard Dumontian model operates upon well-determined values, it is not dynamic enough to account for Amazonian cosmological processes. The value reversal or bidimensionality of hierarchy is not sufficient here, for we need a principle of indetermination and recursiveness. Houseman (1988) provides a brilliant formulation of this argument in a different ethnographic context.
18. The line or frame separating the diatetrically divided whole from its exterior belongs to the universe of the *observer*, not that of the observed.
19. A centre is obviously necessary for drawing a circle; but without a circle there is no centre, just a point. If the central point 'fabricates' the circle, the circle 'institutes' a point as a centre (see n. 6).

20. The inspiration here comes directly from Wagner (1991) and Strathern (1988, 1992), but also from the unpublished work of J. A. Kelly (1999), which stimulated me to write the present essay.
21. This, I would say, especially concerns brothers. Consider the Araweté usage of two married brothers calling each other *le rayin-hi pilã*, which can be translated either as 'my companion-of-mother-of-child' or as 'the companion of my mother-of-child'. In both cases, if my translation is correct, the expression means 'the husband of my (possible) wife'. So two brothers would 'see' themselves as related not through shared parentage but alternative conjugality, that is, through an opposite-sex 'relator'. Accordingly, Araweté married brothers should be defined as 'non-brothers-in-law' rather than vice versa: consanguinity is non-affinity.
22. Lévi-Strauss sees in the *clinamen* of imperfect twinning the key schematism of Amerindian asymmetric dualism. The contrast drawn in *Histoire de Lynx* between twinning in European mythologies (with their emphasis on similarity) and American ones (with their emphasis on difference) is strictly parallel to the contrast drawn in the *Elementary Structures* between the brother and brother-in-law relationship (Lévi-Strauss 1967: 554–5). This seems to point to the intrinsic continuity of the twin-centred mythology of *Histoire de Lynx* with the affinally centred *mythe unique* analysed at length in the *Mythologiques*.
23. In Amerindian cosmologies, the spiritual or 'invisible' dimension of reality is often referred to as 'the other side'. Such idiom, at first sight identical to our 'the beyond', may actually mean something else. The other side of the other side is *this* side: the invisible dimension of the invisible dimension is the visible one, the soul of the soul is the body, and so on. I suspect that the traditional 'Platonic' reading of indigenous body/soul dualities, which understands them to be synonymous with our 'appearance/essence' distinction, is entirely wrong. It should be replaced with an interpretation of these two dimensions as constituting reciprocally the *figure* and the *ground* of each other, that is, a relation totally different from that between appearance and essence.
24. The body connects (and collects) kin, the soul separates them into singular persons, just as the soul connects non-kin (humans to non-humans, for instance) and the body separates them (Viveiros de Castro 1998a). 'Body' and 'soul' play inverse functions as we move up or down the diagram. The process of kinship continues the differentiation of bodies which began at the end of the pre-cosmological era; the soul is like the 'background noise' left by the cosmological Big Bang, the shadow of the primordial transparency among early beings. As the token of the infinite, internal difference of the virtual pre-cosmos (see n. 5), the soul prevents an ultimate and absolute differentiation of bodily exteriorities. The soul works at *connecting what is different*, and, in this sense, is like incest prohibition. This is another way of saying that the soul is 'affinal', while the body is 'consanguineal'.
25. Where souls (or their onomastic reifications so common in Amazonia) are thought to come from the interior of the *socius*, they must pass through channels systematically other than those through which corporeal substances circulate. It is possible to reach the necessary difference minimally by moving up one generation or one gender notch on the kinship grid, that is, by having the grandparents or the opposite-sex siblings of the parents as the soul/naming givers. As far as I know, these relatives are never included in the circle of abstinence which is created when a kin falls ill, and which defines the body-sharing (and body-producing) unit of Amazonian sociality. In this sense, the celebrated *coronide* can be seen as an anti-naming ceremony.

26. Kin relationships do not 'culturally' express a 'naturally' given corporeal connection, because bodies are created by relations, not relations by bodies. If 'no relation without differentiation' is the first cardinal postulate of Amazonian ontology (see above), the idea that substances proceed from relations and not vice versa would be the second one, which I hope to develop elsewhere.
27. It is highly probable that some of the Barasana cosmological motives superbly diagrammatized in C. Hugh-Jones (1979) could be translated into this figure as well.
28. As its present embedding in the first one makes clear, I wrongly interpreted the second diagram featuring the post-mortem transformations of the person (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 253).
29. I have left out the constitution of the person according to the same principles, which has been the subject of much elaboration by Turner (1980, 1995).